DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 223 180 HE 015 701

AUTHOR	Brown, Stephen M.
TITLE	University and College Associated Skill Centers. Higher Education/CETA Project Monograph.
INSTITUTION	American Council on Education, Washington, D.C.
SPONS AGENCY	Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education (ED), Washington, DC.
PUB DATE	Jul 82
NOTE	7p.; For related documents, see HE 015 695-703 and HE 015 723.
AVAILABLE FROM	Higher Education/CETA Project, American Council on Education, One Dupont Circle, Suite 800, Washington, DC 20036.
PUB TYPE	Viewpoints (120) -- Reports - Descriptive (141)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Case Studies; College Role; Educationally Disadvantaged; Education Work Relationship; Eligibility; *Employment Programs; Federal Programs; *Higher Education; Industry; Job Placement; *Job Training; Labor Force Development; Low Income Groups; *Nontraditional Students; School Business Relationship; School Community Relationship; *Skill Centers; Two Year Colleges; *Vocational Education
IDENTIFIERS	*Comprehensive Employment and Training Act; Higher Education CETA Project

ABSTRACT

The structure and function of college- and university-affiliated skill centers are discussed as part of the American Council on Education's Higher Education/Comprehensive Employment and Training Act (CETA) project, which was supported by the Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education. A skill center is defined as a single organizational unit that provides training in multiple occupational areas. Skill centers, which provide trained persons for the private sector and also serve populations traditionally denied access to jobs, offer training in such varied occupations as office occupations, auto mechanics, food preparation, and electronic assembly. Centers offer a number of training programs in line with local employment needs, especially in new, rapidly changing, or expanding occupations such as word processing, data processing, and cable T.V. installation. Training cycles range from 6 to 52 weeks. Some training programs are company specific and the curricula stress hands-on training. Allied instruction and services are an integral part of the curriculum at many skill centers, and instruction in mathematics, reading, and writing is frequently offered. In addition, students are offered services that enhance their ability to obtain and remain in a job. Since most skill centers are funded wholly or in large part by CETA, the students must meet CETA eligibility criteria. The organizational structures of college-associated skill centers and advantages of locating skill centers in colleges are discussed. Three case studies are presented that demonstrate varied organizational structures for college skill centers, the range and types of programs and services, the types of participants served, and the geographic mix of institutions. (SW)

ED223180

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
✓ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official NIE position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

ACE

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

AMERICAN COUNCIL ON EDUCATION

A Monograph of the Higher Education/CETA Project

Joel D. Lapin, Director, Higher Education/CETA Project — July 1982

UNIVERSITY AND COLLEGE ASSOCIATED SKILL CENTERS

By Stephen M. Brown

INTRODUCTION

Many colleges and universities have offered employment oriented training programs and services to the disadvantaged since as far back as 1962, when the Manpower Development and Training Act (MDTA) was passed. This act accelerated the development of skill centers which are now found on many campuses. Few programs are as concentrated, comprehensive, and effective as college and university affiliated skill centers.

A major goal of skill centers is to bridge the human resource gap which exists in a community between available unsubsidized jobs and the skills possessed by the unemployed. Skill centers help mend the mismatch which exists between the labor pool's skill level and the labor market's demands. Skill center personnel analyze the skills necessary to obtain a job successfully in a given occupation, and then develop a curriculum which will give unemployed persons these skills. The major function of a skill center is to train individuals successfully so they can obtain and retain an unsubsidized job.

The concept of a skill center is unclear for at least two reasons. First, the term is used on some college campuses to denote organizational units which primarily focus on the development of skills other than vocational skills. In this sense "skill centers" are more akin to developmental education units. Second, hundreds of colleges and universities in the United States have some involvement with the Comprehensive Employment and Training Act (CETA). The level and variety of this involvement is great, and many colleges have functioning components of a skill center without using the skill center designation. It is possible that some have an entire skill center by other names. For example, Catonsville Community College (Maryland) operates an Occupational Training Center which provides programs and services often found in skill centers but without that specific title. Recognizing these limitations, this monograph uses the term "skill center" to refer to a comprehensive, single organizational unit which provides skill training in multiple occupational areas. The training is geared toward preparing unemployed, disadvantaged individuals for entry level openings in local business and industry.

There is a lack of published material concerning college affiliated skill centers. In a survey of 1,111 community and junior colleges, Andrew S. Korim[1] identified thirty-three colleges which operated skill centers, fourteen of which were funded as skill centers by MDTA (CETA's precursor). Some colleges, such as Portland Community College (Oregon), Community College of Denver (Colorado), Maricopa Community College (Arizona), and Pima Community College (Arizona), were operating skill centers as early as 1964, two years after the enactment of MDTA. In the same survey, 250 colleges responded that they needed more information to develop training. With the passage of CETA in 1973, more colleges became involved with training. This act received greater funding than MDTA and provided greater opportunity for participation. It was also designed to coordinate many of the existing training resources so as to focus services on occupational training for the disadvantaged. The legislation was enacted with a great deal of publicity and promise within the educational community.

Although the South and Southwest seem to have more skill centers, they are found throughout the country in both urban and rural locations. Most college affiliated skill centers are sponsored by two-year institutions. This is largely due to the fact that skill centers seem more congruent with the mission and goals of two-year institutions, than with four-year colleges and universities. The

HE 015 701

training is occupationally specific and usually stresses a hands-on, practical approach. Often the learning activities carry no academic credit. The students are apt to be older, and academically less prepared than traditional college students. Skill centers appear to meet the strong vocational and community service missions of two-year institutions.

Originally, most skill centers were funded exclusively through CETA (and previously MDTA). However, some currently operate based on a tuition charge, and CETA funds may represent 50% of their operating budget. Although some states, such as Ohio, are currently considering state appropriations to support skill centers, many skill centers are still completely CETA funded. A few college centers, such as the Salt Lake Skill Center at Utah Technical College, either receive state allocations or institutional support. The number of skill centers has grown, and they service disadvantaged persons in a wide variety of geographic settings. As a result, the American Vocational Association has established a section exclusively devoted to skill centers.

Skill centers can be a valuable resource in the economic development of a region. The skills of the labor force are a major consideration for new companies investigating an area for a site and those considering expansion of existing sites. Public funds are often used to train persons for jobs in new or expanding companies in many parts of the country. Texas, Virginia, and South Carolina use their higher educational system as a marketing device to attract new business and industry. South Carolina's system of providing "special schools" to train persons at public expense for new companies has received much national attention, and is reportedly one of the reasons for the state's economic resurgence and diversity. Skill centers not only supply trained people, but they do this relatively quickly and inexpensively. Equipping individuals with new skills is of prime importance in light of an underskilled and changing labor force, and rapidly advancing technology. Women returning to the labor market are a significant component in the current labor force and a group for which skill centers have been very successful vehicles for obtaining access to jobs, particularly in traditionally male-dominated fields. Providing public dollars to skill centers affiliated with public colleges also consolidates resources.

Skill centers have extensive experience in providing trained persons for the private sector. They also serve populations who are traditionally denied access to jobs. Each job placement not only helps the local economy in the traditional considerations of new taxes, dollars spent, and related spin-offs, but also provides individuals with economic independence and a sense of individual dignity. This often results in public savings, as individuals no longer require income maintenance programs such as welfare.

PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

Skill centers provide training in a variety of occupations, such as office occupations, drafting, auto mechanics, auto body, machine trades, food preparation, welding, and electronic assembly. Centers offer a number of other training programs in line with local manpower needs, especially in new, rapidly changing, or expanding occupations such as word processing, data processing, computer programming, cable T.V. installation and electronic technician. The number of occupations in which training is offered can be as large as sixteen, found at Pima Community College.

Training cycles range from six weeks to fifty-two weeks. This depends not only on the occupational area, but the student's performance. Most of the centers run "open entry, open exit" programs. That is, the curriculum is competency based and completely individualized, and students can begin and complete their training at any time and at their own pace. This not only provides the students with a more convenient and personalized program, but also results in a larger number of students being served. Thus, skill centers often have a low cost per student and are an efficient means to deliver training and education.

The curriculum is usually intensive and occupationally specific, and stresses hands-on training. Training lasts between twenty and forty hours per week with a number of skill centers opting for the eight hour day. Training is geared toward the student's acquiring the skills which are necessary to obtain an entry level job which has been previously identified as having openings for trained people.

Some training programs or cycles of training clusters are company specific. That is, the training is geared to an occupation in a particular company which is usually new to the area or expanding its labor force. In a company specific training program, company representatives are involved in screening, curriculum modification, and occasionally the actual instruction. Students are taught the particulars of the company's product and often have an opportunity to work on it. The company has usually committed itself to hiring a certain number of the graduates, and upon successful completion students are often hired.

Allied instruction and services are an integral part of the curriculum at many skill centers. Instruction in mathematics, reading, and writing is frequently offered. GED preparation and English as a Second Language are also commonly offered. This supporting instruction is usually developmental in nature. Traditional social science and humanities instruction is not usually offered as part of the training.

Students are offered other services which enhance their ability to obtain and remain in a job. These services include vocational assessment, counseling, orientation to the world of work, and employability skills. Employability skills include assessment, goal setting, job identification, interviewing, and resume writing.

STUDENTS

The funding source largely determines who receives the programs and services of a skill center. Whereas most skill centers are funded wholly or in large part by CETA,

the students must meet CETA eligibility criteria. In general, they are unemployed or underemployed, disadvantaged individuals and meet strict economic guidelines. They are not, for the most part, students who would attend the host college if the skill center did not exist.

The center's students are more apt to be minority group members or public assistance recipients than the host college's students. Even those skill centers which have diversified their base and accept payment or tuition from sources other than CETA have continued to enroll the disadvantaged. Often non-CETA students are sponsored by WIN, Public Aid, State Division of Rehabilitation, Bureau of Indian Affairs, the Veterans' Administration, or the State Migrant Council. A few centers accept tuition paying students. Often financial aid is available, and some centers like the Salt Lake Skills Center have a sliding tuition based on income. Community Action Councils and other community based organizations are used to recruit students.

Entrance into a program is based on an applicant's competency level, and high school diplomas are usually not a requirement for admission. Most centers do their own assessment of students, whereas others rely on the local CETA prime sponsor for this service. In areas which indicate the likelihood of success, a student's skill levels are assessed. These areas may include mechanical aptitude, manual dexterity, vocational interest, math level, reading level, and writing ability. Students whose academic skills are in need of remediation will receive developmental instruction at the skill center. Grand Rapids Junior College Occupational Training is an exception to this rule. They provide only skill training, and students in need of remediation are sent elsewhere to improve their skills.

Some skill centers, such as Grand Rapids Junior College Occupational Training, are strictly providers of skills instruction to disadvantaged adults. Other centers, however, do operate additional programs or services which are part of the CETA delivery system. These include on-the-job training, classroom skill training, training to youth, and work experience. In addition, different arrangements exist between skill centers and the local CETA prime sponsor as to who does screening, assessment, vocational counseling, and job placement.

Because the instructional programs are short, intensive, and open entry and open exit, skill centers service a relatively large number of students in one year. The actual number is dependent on funding, staff size, and program offerings, but some skill centers served as many as 1,600 students in 1981. The cost per student relative to other CETA programs is thus low.

ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

Skill centers which are associated with colleges are placed within a variety of organizational units. A full-time director usually reports to an academic dean. Skill centers are generally afforded some flexibility and autonomy. The faculty and staff are predominantly different from the college's traditional faculty and staff and are hired specifically for the skill center. While the staff possess excellent credentials, these credentials may not correspond with the college's traditional criteria for faculty and staff appointment. As a rule, skill center faculty and staff have more experience in the real world, in industry and/or with disadvantaged adults. They need to have well developed skills for use with a disadvantaged student body.

Another contrast is found in the operating calendars. Many centers operate fifty-two weeks a year and are on different fiscal years than the traditional college.

Skill centers also report to constituencies in addition to that of the college. As the funding agency, CETA has certain expectations for the center, and one of the most important criteria is acceptable job placements. With their emphasis on job placement, skill centers are required to stay up to date with manpower data and keep their curriculum relevant to current job requirements. These requirements are often met with the assistance of an overall advisory board, comprised of persons from community organizations, business, and craft committees for individual training areas.

A certificate of completion is awarded to students who successfully complete the program. Awarding college academic credit from the host institution is controversial and varied in practice. On the basis of institutions examined for this research, skill center graduates do not receive full academic credit for their work, but there are exceptions. For example, students receive academic credit for most of their work at East Bay Skills Center of the Peralta Community College District in Oakland, California, but students receive no academic credit at a number of institutions, such as Maricopa Community College in Phoenix, Arizona. Some skill centers have worked out alternative arrangements. For example, Grand Rapids Junior College awards some academic credit to students for their skill center achievement after they matriculate in a degree program in the college. Students at other colleges have received credit for life experience based on their work at skill centers. At Salt Lake Skills Center students who need to can apply their work toward a high school diploma.

Overall, skill centers affiliated with colleges receive support, resources, and guidance from the rest of the college, but they are somewhat autonomous. For example, Dawson Skills Center of the City Colleges of Chicago is a campus unto itself. Skill centers operate on a different calendar from the college, and are subject to forces which exert pressure and demands on their operation while not generally affecting the college.

The following case studies were chosen to demostrate: (1) The numerous ways in which college skill centers are organized; (2) The range and types of programs and services; (3) The types of participants served; and (4) The geographic mix of institutions.

CASE STUDIES

Maricopa Community College
Maricopa County Skills Center
Phoenix, Arizona 85004

The Maricopa Community College District assumed the administration of this skill center in 1968. It had functioned under the auspices of the Phoenix Union High School District. Maricopa is one of two large, comprehensive, and effective skill centers in Arizona, the other being Pima County Community College Skills Center in Tucson. These two centers are not administratively connected.

This center can service 525 students at any one time, and approximately 2,300 are served per year. Open-entry and open-exit training is offered in the following nine occupational clusters: business/office special skills, cable television, electronic manual fabrication, food preparation and service, health occupations, hotel operations and management education, machine trades, meat cutting, and welding. In addition, classes in GED preparation, basic education, and vocational education are offered to students. Actual occupational training is industrial-specific, and allied instruction is not part of the training. Basic education is offered separately.

Organizationally the center is separate from the college. Thus there are no dual appointments of faculty. No academic credit is awarded for training activities. Advisory committees exist for all clusters. The center is so flexible that new programs can be started or old programs terminated with 30 days' notice.

Approximately 95% of the skill center's funds come from CETA, although anyone can purchase the training services. Tuition is based on a unique system. A standard, small tuition is charged on a daily or hourly basis, and students pay as they go. The cost per program is a function of the amount of time a student needs to complete the program. G.I. benefits are also available to those who qualify.

The center has had success in working with many hard-to-employ persons. Maricopa is an active leader in training ex-offenders and currently runs two programs for incarcerated individuals.

In total, the center has trained more than 13,000 persons. Of this number, 80% completed programs and over 75% of the graduates have been placed.

Grand Rapids Junior College Occupational Training
Grand Rapids, Michigan 49503

Occupational Training (OT) has been in operation for seven years, and is completely CETA funded and provides programs and services exclusively to CETA participants. Occupational Training is autonomous from the college and is located off campus in a formerly abandoned shopping mall. There is an advisory committee composed of employers who are involved in curriculum development and placement.

Prior to admission, individuals are assessed in reading and mathematics. Interviews are also customary, and individuals are judged on their attitudes and motivation. Occupational Training is somewhat selective, and students not accepted are referred to other programs for assistance.

Basic academic skills are not offered at OT, and those in need of developmental work are referred elsewhere. When deficiencies are corrected, individuals can request consideration for entrance into a skill training program. The center does offer counseling, job placement, and job skills coaching to participants. As in assessment, these services emphasize the attitudinal, motivational, and behavioral requirements for successful training.

Students do not receive academic credit for their work at OT. However, after completion of the OT program, if a student matriculates in a parallel degree program at Grand Rapids Junior College, the student will be awarded academic credit for his or her work at OT.

Training lasts forty hours per week and the program length is six to nine months. Approximately two hundred and fifty students are served per year. Forty percent do not have a high school diploma and thirty-five percent are minorities.

In fiscal year 1981, the placement rate for graduates was over 82%, and 95% of the graduates either were placed in unsubsidized employment or entered school.

Utah Technical College at Salt Lake
Salt Lake Skills Center
Salt Lake City, Utah 84107

The Salt Lake Skills Center is one of two skill centers designated in Utah in 1972. The other was sponsored by Weber State College and has since become an independent area vocational center. The Salt Lake Skills Center is a large well organized center which has a staff of over fifty people. There is an advisory committee comprised of community service professionals, and the center receives cooperation from a variety of community organizations.

The center charges tuition on a sliding scale based on family size and income. The Division of Rehabilitative Services, CETA, WIN, Migrant Council, and the Veterans Administration all provide financial assistance for students to attend. The state supports the center and in fiscal year 1982 will be responsible for approximately 60% of the total operating budget. Even though this is a higher education program, these state funds come from the State Board of Education, not the Board of Regents.

Skills training is designed in two formats. Programs in electronic assembly, auto parts clerk, and transportation are designed in a competency based, open entry and open exit format. Training programs in auto body repair, auto mechanics, food service, office occupations and welding are offered in a fixed format. The center offers basic education in reading, math and English.

The center also provides students with intake, orientation, job seeking skills, placement, and follow-up. In addition, the center administers a work experience and comprehensive youth program for CETA.

In an average year, 2,300 students will be served with an average enrollment of 350 to 500 students at a time. Eighty percent of the graduates are placed. No academic credit is awarded, but students can apply their work toward a high school diploma.

ADVANTAGES OF LOCATING SKILL CENTERS IN COLLEGES

There are a number of reasons that skill centers have been able to flourish in colleges. The first is that the colleges which operated the first skill centers with MDTA, demonstrated a college's effectiveness in training and provided a model and impetus for the development of other centers. Second, there are advantages for private or public funding sources to locating a skill center within a college.

Colleges represent a stable, valued community resource with expertise, resources, and personnel that are difficult or terribly expensive to duplicate. Training is a major mission of many community colleges, and college faculty and staff are experienced and competent. Students are more apt to enjoy the pleasant, supportive environment associated with a campus, and value their program as a result of this association. The institution's credibility is likely to aid students in job placement.

College skill centers give students a wider breadth of occupational offerings and the freedom to choose whether to continue training after program completion. Many colleges offer students a chance to convert skill training into an academic degree program or a certificate. If academic credit is awarded, colleges provide a permanent record which is transcribed in a universally accepted manner. Even if credit is not awarded, colleges keep dependable records which will be accepted long after completion of the program.

Colleges can provide organizational support which can foster a center's growth, maturity, and adherence to standards. Colleges also have access to a wider breadth of funding sources and to greater variety of configurations of tuition payment than do most institutions. These factors not only have immediate benefits to funding sources and students, but enhance the long-range survival possibilities of skill centers.

Colleges can also gain from their sponsorship of a skill center. In addition to the accepted benefits of receiving external funds and equipment, a skill center is a means for a college to have extensive interaction with business and industry. This interaction can provide faculty and staff with a greater exposure to a "real world orientation" and to state-of-the-art techniques and equipment, and can foster improvement of curriculum and mutual respect and understanding. These benefits can lead to training contracts, donation of equipment, information on training needs, sources for new faculty, advisory board members, and placements for graduates and co-op students. Companies and colleges working together can produce new grant possibilities, good public relations, and a source of continuing education students.

Skill centers can help colleges meet their community service mission by providing the colleges with access to "new populations." This can bolster a college's outreach to the unemployed and disadvantaged. Those students successfully completing skill center training programs may eventually become full-time or continuing education students.

Skill centers aid colleges in providing a greater breadth of service. Offering different configurations of courses affords students greater choices and may spur curriculum development and change. As discussed earlier, colleges also service the entire community by their involvement with economic development. This is true in the case of both service to existing industry and attracting new industry.

On the other hand, there are potential problems for colleges which wish to be or are currently involved with CETA funded skill centers. Joel D. Lapin[2] and Andrew Korim[3] both point out potential problems for CETA-college linkages. Among these problems are mutual feelings of mistrust and negative perceptions, problems in contrasting operating styles, philosophical differences, and administrative problems. Although both feel colleges are flexible enough to accommodate these differences, the potential administrative problems with CETA are real. Among the problems are guidelines, regulations, and procedures which must be interfaced with a college's existing systems. Funding is often in a state of flux and long range planning is difficult. It is impossible to make commitments to staff between programs. Finally, lag money creates demands by CETA to quickly start and implement new programs. Although these problems are formidable, they are not insoluble.

SUMMARY

There is an increasing need to train and re-train persons for expanding sectors of the economy. College-associated skill centers offer a proven model for effectively providing this training. College sponsorship of such programs brings direct advantages to students, funding sources, business and industry, and higher education.

College-associated skill centers unite colleges' expertise, resources, and reputation in training with the special mission of the CETA legislation. The centers provide disadvantaged, unemployed persons with skills training that leads to jobs. The training is designed to be occupationally specific, stress the practical, and be flexible to meet the students' needs.

The college-associated skill centers have been effective in providing trained personnel for the private sector. This is reflected in the high placement rates reported by the skill centers. Job placements have direct benefit to the participant, community, and economy. The efficient and cost effective delivery of training services is beneficial to all. College associated skill centers have developed a model for effective delivery of training programs and services.

Footnotes

[1] Andrew S. Korim, *Manpower Training in Community Colleges* (Washington: American Association of Community and Junior Colleges, 1974).

[2] Joel D. Lapin, "Building and Strengthening Linkages Between CETA and Community Colleges" (Paper presented at the 14th Annual Conference of the National Council for Resource Development, 1980).

[3] Korim, *Manpower Training*.

Stephen M. Brown

Dr. Brown is currently the Director of Manpower Training and Externally Funded Programs at Northern Essex Community College which is in Haverhill, Massachusetts. He operates the largest college based occupational training center for disadvantaged adults in New England, and has over ten years' experience working with disadvantaged adults.

Dr. Brown was awarded a B.A. from Southeastern Massachusetts University, an M.A. from the University of Rhode Island, and a doctorate from Boston University. He is also the author of: *A Brief Handbook for the Development of Neighborhood Coalition, A Primer for Colleges which intend to provide Training in Industry, Career Counseling for Minorities*, and *A Qualitative Investigation of Poor, White Males from Lower Socio-Economic Environments who are College Graduates*. Dr. Brown is a member of a local AMPB and PIC and of the state Prime Sponsor Planning Council.

The views expressed in this monograph are those of the author, not necessarily those of the American Council on Education.